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SUBJECT: Jordan: Iraq Embassy Reports Repatriation

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11. (SBU) Summary: On October 25, more than 100 Iraqis returned from Jordan via an Iraqi-chartered aircraft. The October 25 flight

appears to be the first planeload of Iraqis to return from Jordan following similar operations from Egypt, and Syria earlier this year. Neither the GOJ nor UNHCR was involved in this operation. Observers expressed concerns that poverty might have compelled the returnees to go home. End summary.

Government of Jordan and UNHCR Weary of Unilateral Repatriation

12. (SBU) On October 26, the Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan announced the departure of 107 Iraqis from Jordan. Iraqi Embassy First secretary Mustafa Ibrahim, said that the Iraqi Embassy in Amman chartered a plane that took Iraqi passengers back to Iraq on Saturday October 25 from Marka Airport. The Government of Jordan and UNHCR did not take part in the planning or execution of the operations, he said. (Note: This follows a recent conversation with the Secretary General from Jordan's Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Nasser Schraideh, who expressed frustration over Iraqi Government repatriation of its citizens without coordination with the Ministry or UNHCR. Schraideh added that his Minister knows that the number of Iraqis entering Jordan each year outpaces the small repatriation operations, but he would not share the number of new entries with the Embassy. End note.)

13. (SBU) A contact at Jordan's Ministry of the Interior said he had been aware of the returns but that Jordan did not approve them.

The contact, Director of the Minister's Office Nasser Ramadin, said

that only the most vulnerable Iraqis were returning home in the Iraqi-sponsored repatriations, enticed by a USD 500 incentive the GOI paid to each returnee. UNHCR-Jordan Deputy Representative Arafat Jamal confirmed the Ministry for The Displaced and Migration

within Iraq plans and carries out repatriations unilaterally. As Iraqis are not "refugees" in Jordan, the GOJ takes no special measures to monitor their departure, he said.

Returns--Voluntary and with Dignity?

14. (SBU) In the last two months, the Iraqi Embassy in Jordan has assisted 252 Iraqis to repatriate. UNHCR reports assisting 170 Iraqi repatriations from Jordan in the same period.

15. (SBU) NGOs operating in Jordan have reported an increase in these and other spontaneous returns in the past quarter. According to NGO partners, anecdotal reporting indicates Iraqi families are crossing back into Iraq without assistance.

16. (SBU) UNHCR staff and the GOJ expressed the concern that Iraqis

were returning home, not out of conviction that this was best for them, but because life in Jordan, without access to jobs, was too expensive. Attracted by promises of return incentives, the Iraqis prefer an uncertain life in Iraq to penury in Jordan. UNHCR-Jordan's position is that return to escape poverty is not voluntary

return in the sense of the UNHCR mandate.

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